

to say that there are times where the dysfunction in the Senate just goes too far. This is an example of it.

He said: "This is embarrassing."

It is embarrassing. It is embarrassing for the Senate and for our Nation. Even Republicans—I should say some Republicans—are embarrassed. They know there is no rationale for delaying a vote for America's chief law enforcement officer. There is no reason that we cannot confirm Loretta Lynch today—right now, even. There is nothing preventing the majority leader from coming to the Senate floor immediately and moving the Senate into executive session for consideration of Ms. Lynch's nomination.

Why then is the majority leader determined to make her wait until after the trafficking legislation is approved? Why? We are now spending the first 2 weeks of this current work period finishing two matters—human trafficking and her nomination. These two matters could have been completed months ago. Everyone is aware of what has transpired with the human trafficking bill.

It is sufficient to say that Republicans tried to pull a fast one on the American people. Republicans attempted to broaden a precedent that traditionally prevents Federal funds for paying for abortion, except in cases of rape, incest, and when the life of the mother is at risk. This is commonly known as the Hyde language. The Hyde language has applied to taxpayer dollars. Republicans want to change that to apply to nontaxpayer dollars.

It was a failed political ploy, and it is no surprise, then, that the Republicans are scrambling to save their necks after trying to dupe American women. My Republican colleagues appear to be close to seeing the light on human trafficking, and there seems to be a path forward. But there is no guarantee that we can do it. As of right now, we do not have an agreement in place to put the finishing touches on our work on the bill. But we are working on that goal. The progress we have made is due almost entirely to the good-faith efforts of Senators MURRAY, LEAHY, and AMY KLOBUCHAR.

When are Republicans going to see the light on Loretta Lynch? When will the majority leader realize he continues to obstruct a qualified nominee for absolutely no reason? The Senate should turn to a vote on Ms. Lynch's nomination immediately. Every day that passes without a newly confirmed Attorney General proves once and again that Republicans cannot lead and they certainly cannot govern.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will resume consideration of S. 178, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 178) to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Pending:

McConnell (for Cornyn) amendment No. 1120, to strengthen the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act by incorporating additional bipartisan amendments.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, as we all know, a vote of confirmation for Loretta Lynch to be our next Attorney General has now been delayed 164 days, or 5 months. We have seen this qualified woman waiting for a confirmation vote, and we have had at least 51 Members—a majority—indicating they will support her confirmation.

I remember coming to the floor listening to colleagues during the Bush administration state over and over again that elections have consequences, that Presidents have a right to have their nominees voted on, and that it is our responsibility to make sure, if something comes out of committee, that we vote on a final confirmation.

When we look at the fact that we have seen Loretta Lynch wait for a vote on the floor for a combined length of time that equals more than the last seven Attorneys General, I really do believe, as the President has said, enough is enough.

I remember a time when we had a controversial nominee—John Ashcroft—and many of us did not support that nomination. I did not support that nomination. But we brought it to the floor for a vote. He waited 42 days. At the time, people said that was a long time. He was not blocked. We did not filibuster. We did not require a supermajority. In fact, there were 42 of us who voted no, so we could have stopped it on a procedural vote. But we allowed the nomination of John Ashcroft to come to the floor for a vote.

So we fast-forward. And we have seen this, of course, over and over again, as we look at the President's nominees in the last 6½ years. Now we see this eminently qualified woman, who has been held up as of today 164 days, waiting and waiting to have the opportunity to have a vote up or down on confirmation. If people want to vote no, they have that right, but she deserves a vote.

Today, we are going to vote on the confirmation of a district court judge

in Texas. I think it is good that the Southern District of Texas will have a Federal court judge, but the entire country needs a permanent Attorney General. In fact, the Attorney General's office is the one that actually brings the cases to Federal courts and tries them on behalf of all the American people. So it is really ridiculous that we stand at this point where we are having to ask, after more than 5 months, that there be a vote for Loretta Lynch.

After she was reported out, we saw a very distinguished nominee for Secretary of Defense come out of committee and immediately come to the floor and be confirmed, but Loretta Lynch has waited and waited. We continue to vote on district judges, and Loretta Lynch is waiting and waiting.

We hear all kinds of excuses, all kinds of reasons. We are hearing that Loretta Lynch's nomination to be Attorney General cannot be voted on until we complete another very important bill—the human trafficking bill—that we all want to get done. It has, unfortunately, had a curve ball added because of the politics around choice and abortion that has been interjected into this, and we are having to work our way through that. I have been involved in a lot of discussions, as my colleagues have. I am confident we can address those if people want to get this done on behalf of girls and women in our country. But that has nothing to do with the nomination of Loretta Lynch for Attorney General, other than one thing, which is that as U.S. attorney of the Eastern District of New York, she presided over a very effective antitrafficking program, investigating and prosecuting scores of defendants.

In that sense, again, we need Loretta Lynch—her talent, her expertise, and her experience—to be able to tackle what is a horrible situation that way too many of our girls and women find themselves in. We somehow for too long have thought this was something that was happening someplace else. Yet we saw it in Lansing, MI—where I live, the capital of Michigan—where there was a case in the trafficking situation that the FBI and local officials addressed. What we are finding right now is that as we proceed with confirming other people for other positions—Monday nights we are voting on other positions, we are voting on district judges, and we voted on other people for other positions not held up by human trafficking, not held up by trying to get that bill resolved, but for some reason the Attorney General position has somehow been held up.

I don't buy it. It makes no sense that we would pick one person—one person—not others but one person and decide that this person and this nomination, this confirmation vote will be held hostage to another issue. It is time to stop it. Now, 164 days is long enough; 164 days is long enough. It is time to give Loretta Lynch the respect and the vote she has been waiting for and she deserves.

I yield back the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, this body—the Senate—continues to rush through one of the most consequential changes to U.S. economic policy this decade with little media attention, little scrutiny by committees, and little discussion from leadership of this Senate. Last week, we were called into a rushed legislative hearing on fast-track and a trade package with little notice and no bill to see. We had less than 13 hours' notice for a committee meeting—the standard here is 1 week, and I believe that is the Senate rule—on one of the most secretive documents we have seen in front of us. Senators and their staffs, Congress men and women and their staffs, have limited access to this document—the Trans-Pacific Partnership—and no access to legislation upon which we had a hearing on Thursday. It was only after the hearing that they finally decided to introduce the bill. Yet, this affects more than 50 percent of the world's GDP. Fifty percent of the world's GDP could be affected by this package. Millions of American jobs are on the line. Yet, Congress is rushing this bill through.

We cannot fast-track fast-track legislation. We know what so-called free trade has done to this country. It may not affect too many people who dress like this in this town, people who wear expensive suits, but for those in the heartland and in places such as Des Moines and Iowa City and Columbus and Cleveland, we know bad trade deals have devastated towns.

I grew up in Mansfield, OH. When I was a kid, we had thousands of jobs at Westinghouse, Ohio Brass, Mansfield Tire, Fisher Body, Goreman-Rupp, and so many other companies. Almost all of those companies have shut down—not just because of globalization and bad trade deals, but certainly that contributed to it. Every one of those companies that hasn't shut down has laid off, in most cases, thousands of its workers.

On Friday, I was in Dayton, where I spoke with Jimmy Allen. Jimmy worked at Appleton Paper for 45 years. He was a union officer for 43 of those years. He was one of 400 workers laid off due to unfair trade in 2012 when China cheated on currency, undermining the U.S. paper industry.

I hear all the time from workers like Jimmy. George Rossi of Warren, OH—

at the other end of the State—wrote to me to share his story. He wrote:

My wife lost her job of 15 years at GE in Ravenna, OH because of foreign trade. The plant that once employed 600 is now closed. My brother-in-law lost his [job] at Ohio Lamp in Warren, which is now closed. My plant, WCI Steel, is now closed. At one time the plant employed 1,800 people.

George wrote: I could go on and on. There have been many friends and family, so many who have worked in numerous plants that are now closed—in large part because of bad foreign trade deals.

Jamie Vaughan wrote to me saying that Jamie's father and Jamie's grandfather worked at Ford in Canton, OH, until it shut down. Jamie's father was able to transfer to Indianapolis, where Jamie and Jamie's brother also worked, until that Ford plant shut down too. Jamie wrote:

They built a plant exactly like Indy's in Brazil. My brother and I transferred to California. A few years later, that plant shut down.

I got a letter from Gary Ordway of Continental, OH, about how factory closures have ripple effects across entire communities. He wrote:

In 1995 I was employed with General Motors Powertrain Foundry in Defiance, OH, where we were working 12 hours a day, 6 to 7 days a week, and then along came the North American Free Trade Agreement. There were over 5,000 employees working at that time, and after NAFTA there was a constant loss of jobs, so today, there are about 1,000 employees left. We are looking at a weekly loss of \$4.8 million in wages to the local economy and around \$1.2 million in weekly taxes lost due to the 4,000 jobs exported because of NAFTA. Within the next couple of years the foundry will be losing all of its iron castings and another 350 jobs will be eliminated, and Plant One is scheduled to be torn down. So NAFTA wasn't good for our community and foundry because our iron casting business went to Mexico.

That was Gary Ordway of northwest Ohio. We have seen it in the northwest and we have seen it in the southwest.

Joseph Hicks from Elyria, OH, wrote:

I am a member of Local 1104 in Lorain. I work at U.S. Steel tubular division. As of the 22nd of March, me and 600 of my brothers and sisters have been placed on indefinite layoff, some departments idled, due to lack of work. This is mainly [because of] the illegal dumping of cheaply-made steel.

I would add, subsidized steel.

Foreign countries cut corners on safety, pay workers next to nothing, and don't care about quality. With these ingredients, they are able to sell their steel products for a lot less than we at U.S. steel can.

There used to be a time when "Made in America" meant something. I long to see that be the attitude again.

Joseph goes on:

I am suffering greatly now because of the trickle-down effect. I am laid off, I have lost my job, my career, my way of life to support my growing and deserving family. I have a wife, Megan, [who] cannot work because she has to care for our 2-year-old disabled daughter.

I ask, beg, our public officials . . . do what needs to be done to get American workers back to work.

That is Joseph from U.S. Steel in Lorain.

We owe these workers more than rushed hearings. We owe them more than to rubberstamp a deal we have barely been able to read. Keep in mind that we didn't see this bill until Thursday night. We have still not had one hearing on this bill to discuss the bill. The chairman of the committee wants to do the markup the day after tomorrow, and this bill will govern potentially 60 percent of the world's GDP. So they want to fast-track this fast-track legislation so they can pass more trade agreements that outsource jobs.

Trade done right can create jobs, but our current trade deals amount to corporate handouts and worker sellouts.

The Economic Policy Institute found that the wage loss to workers on the wrong end of expanded trade is almost certainly larger than the estimated net national gains from the TPP. They write that there is no such thing as an all-gain, no-pain treaty. We know that is true because workers such as Joseph and Jamie and George and Gary and Jimmy feel that pain.

I urge my colleagues over the next couple of days to ask the tough questions and demand answers from the U.S. Trade Representative, who has told us little and who has given us even less access to these trade agreements, and to say no to a trade deal that will end up fast-tracking more jobs overseas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR EN BLOC—H.R. 636, H.R. 644, H.R. 1295, H.R. 1314, AND S. 984

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I understand there are five bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bills by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 636) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 644) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend and expand the charitable deduction for contributions of food inventory.

A bill (H.R. 1295) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to improve the process for making determinations with respect to whether organizations are exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of such Code.

A bill (H.R. 1314) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a right to an administrative appeal relating to adverse determinations of tax-exempt status of certain organizations.

A bill (S. 984) to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide Medicare beneficiary access to eye tracking accessories for speech generating devices and to remove the rental cap for durable medical equipment under the Medicare Program with respect to speech generating devices.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, in order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceeding en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bills will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The senior Senator from Louisiana.

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE DEEPWATER HORIZON TRAGEDY

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I rise today to solemnly observe the 5-year anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon oilspill, also known as the BP disaster. It was a major and deeply tragic incident that resulted in the loss of 11 lives in the Gulf of Mexico and beyond that really devastated the gulf region.

I wish to start where we should always start—by remembering in a solemn and prayerful way the 11 men who lost their lives in the incident. They were Donald “Duck” Clark, 49, of Newellton, LA; Stephen Ray Curtis, 40, of Georgetown, LA; Gordon Jones, 28, of Baton Rouge, LA; Roy Wyatt Kemp, 27, of Jonesville, LA; Keith Blair Manuel, 56, of Gonzales, LA; Jason Anderson, 35, of Midfield, TX; Adam Weise, 24, of Yorktown, TX; Aaron Dale Durkeen, 37, of Philadelphia, MS; Karl Kleppinger, Jr., 38, of Natchez, MS; Dewey Revette, 48, of State Line, MS; and Shane Roshto, 22, of Liberty, MS. We lift up those men and their families in our prayers, and we will continue to keep those men whose lives were lost and continue to keep their families in our fervent thoughts and prayers.

While 5 years have passed, the effects of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy are still felt today in communities all along the gulf coast. The terrible and unnecessary loss of life, the harming of our precious coastal ecosystems, and the persisting economic burdens serve as a constant reminder of the failures that led to the spill, as well as the lessons learned in the 5 years since.

Poor industry and government oversight and the failure by many involved to enforce safety regulations were largely responsible for multiple mistakes leading up to the tragedy. As a result, we have learned many lessons on how to prevent future accidents such as this. The first is that the lives and safety of the men and women who work in this field are absolutely paramount and need to be kept so, and the Federal and State safety standards overseeing them should reflect that as a priority.

Changes are needed, and the Federal agencies that oversee and regulate the offshore energy industry must communicate clearly with State and local governments and impacted industries. They must also do a better job of en-

forcing strong, necessary safety and environmental standards.

It is also important that we prevent the administration or any future administration from having knee-jerk reactions to incidents such as this. Each gulf coast community remembers the devastating effects of the offshore drilling moratorium that followed the disaster—something that was completely unnecessary, including in the opinion of so many experts. Once the Obama administration imposed this unnecessary drilling moratorium, that decision had crippling results for Louisiana and Gulf State economies. When accidents such as this spill happen, there needs to be a calculated, logical, and immediate response in order to replace ineffective regulations with rules that focus on preserving lives and protecting the environment. It is imperative that we prevent shortsighted Federal mandates and thoughtless regulations that hinder regional recovery and destroy local economies instead.

We also learned that there needs to be a clear and specific judicial penalty process in place in order to ensure that claims can be efficiently filed and finalized in order to let those who are affected by such disasters return to some sense of normalcy, day-to-day normalcy, and economic normalcy as quickly as possible. This should include insuring responsible parties such as BP are timely in paying their judicially and statutorily mandated fines and penalties. There is absolutely no excuse that 5 years later gulf residents, in many cases, are still waiting for the responsible parties to fulfill their legal obligations, including under the RESTORE Act.

As we remember the Deepwater Horizon tragedy today, let us renew our commitment to work on all of these matters and to finish the work that is left to do as our gulf coastlines and economies continue to recover.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, 5 years ago today, 11 Americans were lost when the Deepwater Horizon exploded off the gulf coast. I would like to name them. This is hard. These were the people we grew up with. I apologize for being emotional, but these are our neighbors, and so to remember them—Jason Anderson 35, Midfield, TX. Jason had two kids, and his wife Shelley said that Thanksgiving was his favorite holiday.

Aaron Dale “Bubba” Burkeen, 37, of Philadelphia, MS. He passed on his wedding anniversary and 4 days before his birthday. He was married with two children.

Donald Clark, 49, of Newellton, LA. Husband to Sheila with four kids. He was a fisherman. To honor him on the anniversary of his death, his family says a prayer and releases balloons over a lake in his favorite color, which is sky blue.

Stephen Ray Curtis, 40, of Georgetown, LA. Stephen was married and the father of two teenagers.

Gordon Jones of Baton Rouge, LA. Gordon was 28. His wife was Michelle. His son Max was born 3 weeks after Gordon passed. An oak tree was planted on the LSU campus on the path where he ran.

Roy Wyatt Kemp, 27, of Jonesville, LA. He was married to Courtney and father of one child.

Karl Kleppinger, Jr., 38, of Natchez, MS. He was a veteran of the first gulf war and the father of one.

Keith Blair Manuel, 56, of Gonzales, LA. Keith had three daughters, was a big fan of LSU sports, and had football and basketball season tickets.

Dewey A. Revette, 48, of State Line, MS. His wife was Sherri. They had been married for 26 years.

Shane M. Roshto, 22, of Liberty, MS. He was the youngest of the men who died. His wife was Natalie, and his son is Blaine.

Adam Weise, 24, of Yorktown, TX. Adam drove 10 hours to Louisiana every 3 weeks to work on the rig. He was a high school football star and spent his off time hunting and fishing.

We pray that the families find peace in the memories of their sons, husbands, and fathers.

The spill was the worst in our Nation's history, and while the consequences of this spill are still seen, it is our task to live forward and, in so doing, honor the memory of these men and provide a better future for their families.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a moment of silence to honor their memory.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(Moment of silence.)

Mr. CASSIDY. Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEEPWATER HORIZON TRAGEDY

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, it is 5 in the afternoon. Exactly 5 years ago, at 5 p.m., the crew of the Deepwater Horizon mobile oil drilling unit began what is called a negative pressure test of the Macondo prospect oil formation. A cascade of menacing events followed the first failed test.

At around 9:40 that evening, drilling mud began gushing out onto the rig. The well had kicked. The crew activated the rig's blowout preventer 1 mile below the surface of the Gulf of Mexico, down at the bottom of the gulf.